



[configuring an e-mail system polling process on a user machine] obtaining access information for a plurality of e-mail accounts;

[polling a plurality of e-mail systems from said user machine;]

retrieving mail data from said plurality of e-mail accounts [systems concerning mail intended for said user]; and

[storing said data on said user machine in a format that permits the storage of] consolidating said mail data [pertaining to] from said plurality of e-mail [systems] accounts.

2. (amended) A method for monitoring multiple electronic mail [systems] accounts as recited in claim 1 wherein [said step of configuring an e-mail system polling process] obtaining access information includes [the steps of]:

[designating] receiving the designation of a plurality of e-mail [system accessors] accounts; and

[designating an activation schedule for each of said plurality of] receiving the designation of access protocols concerning said plurality of e-mail system [accessors] accounts.

Please cancel claims 3 - 7 without prejudice.

8. (amended) A method for monitoring multiple electronic mail [systems] accounts as recited in claim [5] 2 wherein said [step of storing data includes the step of storing an e-mail database structure] consolidated mail data is stored in a machine-readable memory of a user's system., where said e-mail database structure includes a plurality of mail headers and a message block for each retrieved messages, where each message block is linked to a mail header corresponding to the origin of the data stored in said message block.]

Please cancel claim 9 without prejudice.

10. (amended) A method for monitoring multiple electronic mail [systems] accounts as recited in claim [1] 8 further comprising [the steps of]:

visually displaying an indication on said user's system that there is at least one message from at least one e-mail [system for said user account]. ✓

11. (amended) A method for monitoring multiple electronic mail [systems] accounts as recited in claim 10 further comprising visually displaying information concerning at least one message [detected at an e-mail system] for said user.

12. (amended) An apparatus for monitoring multiple electronic mail [systems] accounts comprising:

a digital processor;

read/write memory coupled to said digital processor;

at least one external communications channel coupled to said digital processor permitting said digital processor to communicate with a plurality of external electronic mail [systems] accounts;

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a poller at least partially stored in said read/write memory and executable on said digital processor, said poller being operative to generate inquiries over said at least one communications channel to said plurality of electronic mail [systems] accounts;

a data retriever at least partially stored in said read/write memory and executable on said digital processor, said data retriever being operative to receive data concerning mail intended for a designated user from said plurality of electronic mail [systems] accounts; and

a [database handler] consolidator [at least partially stored in said read/write memory and executable on said digital processor, said database handler being operative to store and retrieve said] developing data concerning mail for said designated user from said plurality of electronic mail [systems] accounts.

13. (amended) An apparatus for monitoring multiple electronic mail [systems] accounts as recited in claim 12 wherein said at least one external communications channel includes a Local Area Network (LAN).

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14. (amended) An apparatus for monitoring multiple electronic mail [systems] accounts as recited in claim 12 wherein said at least one external communications channel includes a [modem and a telephone line] Wide Area Network (WAN).

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Please cancel claims ~~15-17~~ without prejudice.

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18. (amended) An article of manufacture for monitoring multiple electronic mail [systems] accounts comprising:

a machine-readable storage medium;

a poller stored in said storage medium and including program instructions to generate inquiries over at least one communications channel to a plurality of electronic mail [systems] accounts;

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a data retriever stored in said storage medium and including program instructions to receive data concerning mail intended for a designated user from said plurality of electronic mail [systems] accounts; and

a data handler stored in said storage medium and including program instructions to store and retrieve said data concerning mail for said designated user from said plurality of electronic mail [systems] accounts.

19. (amended) An article of manufacture as recited in claim 18 further comprising:

a controller stored in said storage medium for selectively controlling said poller, said data retriever, and said data handler.

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~~20. (amended) An article of manufacture as recited in claim 29 further comprising an inputter stored in said storage medium to provide user inputs to said controller, and a display coupled to said data handler and to said controller to selectively display data stored by said data handler.~~ ✓

21. (amended) An e-mail database structure stored in a machine-readable memory comprising:

a plurality of mail headers corresponding to a plurality of e-mail [systems] accounts that are being monitored for messages for a designated user; and

a message block corresponding to each detected message for said designated user from said plurality of e-mail [systems] accounts, wherein each message block is linked with an e-mail header of said plurality of e-mail headers corresponding to the e-mail system from which it was derived.

22. (amended) An e-mail database structure as recited in claim 21 wherein each of said plurality of mail headers includes information concerning the number of messages with which it is linked.

23. (amended) An e-mail database structure as recited in claim 22 wherein each of said message blocks includes a message identification code associated with said message block and its mail header.

24. (amended) An e-mail database structure as recited in claim 23 wherein each of said message blocks includes information concerning said a message for said designated user and pointers to data reflecting a content of said message.